

HOW WE TESTED

Testers Play a Little 'Ping'-pong

We ran each unit through day and night viewability testing as well as a full-series of functionality checks to see how they handle chartplotting chores.

Displays were rated under a variety of lighting conditions that included bright sunlight, cloudy skies, twilight, and nighttime conditions. Each screen was viewed from straight on and severe side angles, with and without polarized sunglasses, and using different background color palettes. No screen fogging was reported on any of the test units.

Each plotter was tested with live GPS fix information provided by its supplied GPS sensor. Testers evaluated chartplotter user interface by performing various actions like creating waypoints, building routes, changing map ranges, and varying the chart orientation. Intuitive software, easy

data entry, and dedicated function keys improved ratings.

Each sounder was rated for both presentation and usage. Feature-rich units that were easy to use received the highest ratings.

We deployed three ping-pong balls; each mounted 6 feet apart on heavy monofilament line in a depth of 32 feet to serve as our sounder targets. The line was held on the bottom with several pounds of lead and marked on the surface with a float. We did not test for maximum depth capability on any sounder.

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Among the features testers looked at were the auto gain (top photo) and manual gain (bottom photo) functions. With the Lowrance LMS-525C DF (right), fine-tuning with manual gain made a big difference in minimizing "noise."

